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INDEX CARDS

Old Oklahoma-1890

Union City

El Reno

BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin, El Reno, Oklahoma

This report made on (date) July 6, 1937

1. Name Mr. W. T. Baker.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 401 South Foster

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 27 Year 1849

5. Place of birth Tennessee

6. Name of Father Bryant H. Baker Place of birth 1816 in Mass.

Other information about father Died when he was 78 years old

7. Name of Mother Marta (Eric) Baker Place of birth Lee County, Va.

Other information about mother His mother died when she was 77 years

old. He doesn't remember either her birth date or the date of her death.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 5.

Mr. W. T. Baker was born on the 27th of July in 1849, in Tennessee, and came to Iowa "when I was a little bit of a kid."

His father, Bryant H. Baker, was born in Massachusetts, in 1816, and was seventy-eight years of age when he died.

His mother, Mrs. Marta (Erie) Baker, was born in Lee County, Virginia, and was seventy-seven years of age when she died.

Before Mr. Baker came to Oklahoma he ran a huckster's wagon in Iowa (he grew up in that state). He drove a pair of mules, and had a sort of grocery on wheels. He would buy corn, oats, hay, etc., and trade or sell these to get groceries and other supplies to trade and sell to the farmers and other customers. He sold calico, jeans, coffee, and sometimes tobacco but he said they did not allow them to sell tobacco much and he did not always handle that commodity.

A friend of his ran a grocery store and he got his supplies from this friend.

In Civil War times he drilled some, but the war closed before he got to go. He and Ella M. Alger were married on election day, when Grant was elected. There were

eight children by this marriage, five boys and three girls. Four of his children are still living.

In 1890 he came to Oklahoma from Iowa. He and his father-in-law came here in a covered wagon. He bought a relinquishment from a man by the name of John Bristol, and filed on it. This place was located two miles north and two miles east of Union City, Oklahoma, and the only improvements on it at the time of purchase was a sod dugout, one of those half and half affairs. He and his family lived on this farm for seven or eight years. One of their sons died here.

Mr. Baker plowed and planted some cotton the first year after he got this farm and later planted corn and wheat; he also raised hogs and cattle. He said, "we picked up until we were well fixed." He bought land, two claims in Canadian County, and also one farm out by Gracemont in Caddo County, which he deeded to one of his sons, who is now living on it.

As to the improvements that he put on his farm, he built a frame house, one room of which was 16 by 16 feet, a kitchen 14 by 14 feet and an up-stairs -- two rooms up-stairs and two rooms down stairs. He stated that it did

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not cost him much as he could get good dimension stuff for \$14.00 per thousand square feet. He built a barn 40 by 40 with a driveway running through it, horses on one side and granaries on the other. He also built chicken houses and other out-buildings. About 80 or 90 acres were broken out while he had the place.

The only building that he remembers being here in El Reno when he came here in 1890 was a barn in the middle of a block belonging to Sam Peach. Soon there were saloons and other buildings.

He used to run a blacksmith shop in Union City and has also been a carpenter. He built Jack Gibson's house here in El Reno and has done lots of other carpenter work here in town. He used to work on the railroad and worked in what they call "the cut" west of town. He plowed and his son drove a team. He worked for Jim and Frank Baker at Shawnee, as blacksmith, when they were building "the east west railroad, in 1891 or '92." "They were good bosses, lots of sport."

Mr. W. T. Baker made a point on a plow share out of a rasp and they called it "Uncle Billy's needle point."

A Mr. Ted Foster was another one of his railroad bosses.

He was here in El Reno when the land drawing took place in 1901, and two of his sons registered but failed to draw farms.

He has seen lots of Indians, but knew none of them intimately. He knew one by the name of "Old Crow", another by the name of "White Shirt" and another by the name of "Old Jim." "Old Jim was a good hearted old fellar", Mr. Baker stated.

He remembers a Mr. Lon Whipple who was thrown from his horse and got his neck broken. His neck was straightened and put in a plaster cast, and the man got well.

His first wife died in 1930 and he later married a woman by the name of Susie Slimp, who also died two years later.

He owns the little home where he now lives at 401 South Foster but has deeded all his farms to his sons.